Charles County Master Gardeners
University of Maryland Extension
Charles County Office
9375 Chesapeake Street, Suite 119
La Plata Maryland 20646

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**Maryland Native Plant Society Conference**

On Saturday, and Sunday September 24 and 25, the MNPS 2011 Annual Fall Conference was held at the College of Southern Maryland, in La Plata. The focus was on the habitats of the lower Potomac River. September 24 was also National Public Lands Day, so the presentations focused on the value of public lands and the role they play both ecologically and socially. Additionally, on the evening of the 24th a gathering was held and it was a wonderful opportunity to share field trip experiences, meet other native plant enthusiasts and enjoy a buffet dinner.

Additional MNPS field trips were held on Sunday, September 25.

A number of Master Gardeners attended and in the next issue of The Compost they will share their experiences.

Our very own MG, Jessica Milstead, and Carole Bergmann, Ecologist with the Montgomery County Park System, were leaders of the Piscataway National Park field trip on Saturday.
REPORTING VOLUNTEER AND EDUCATION HOURS

By Pauline C. Spurlock, Intern and Record Keeper

Number of Contacts by Race and Gender Section: To avoid double-counting, the only person who should count these numbers is the lead for the project.

Reporting travel time: Please note the following on page 3, in the 2nd column, of the Maryland Master Gardener Program Policies and Guidelines, on the Maryland Master Gardeners website (www.mastergardener.umd.edu; click on MG Administrative in the side menu, then click Policies and Guidelines).

All volunteer hours should be recorded on your personal log sheet and totaled by activity. This includes planning meetings and events, committee and administrative work, and time spent preparing for activities. Volunteer service includes travel time for volunteer activities and MG Association meetings.

Do: count the time you spend traveling to and from the volunteer site as part of your volunteer hours.

Don’t: count the time you spend traveling to and from the Advanced Training site as part of your advanced training hours.

Interns: While education hours do not count while you are an intern, it is recommended that you report them in the Education section of your Volunteer Activity Log.

Log forms are available at the Extension Office. It is also available at the Maryland Master Gardeners website (under Forms on the MG Administrative page).

Due Dates For Volunteer Hours: By October 10 and January 4, 2012
(Hours must be sent to UMD for 2011 data collection by January 9, 2012)

Codes For Ongoing Activities

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Two Ribbons and Much Praise Won At the Fair

By Sally Hopp, Intern

What a wonderful surprise and pleasure to walk in Thursday and see that the Master Gardeners had won not one, but two first prize ribbons in the Flower building! We received a blue ribbon from the Charles County Fair Board for an Educational Exhibit & Table Display, and an Educational Award ribbon from the Charles County Garden Club.

In the Drury building (Canning) we had a beautiful display For Grow It Eat It. Outside the building we had celery and potatoes growing in baskets, as well as a lettuce box with a crop of lettuce.

Several people worked to create our displays and I thank them all. The committee consisted of Pauline Spurlock, Neal Johnson, Jan Lakey-Waters, Mary Gaskins, and Cheryl Kasunic. Bob Eppley, Mary Grant, Miki Pickering, Nandise Morgan-Jackson, Rosemary Ewing, Brenda Elmore, Debbie SIndt, Kathy Cox, Pat Biles, Lin Murray, Jessica Milstead, Gale Kladitis, and Cindi Barnhart contributed to our success by staffing or helping to create the displays.

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The boardwalk through the marsh in Piscataway National Park in Accokeek has been completely rebuilt and it’s a wonderful place to explore. On August 17 a group of MGs took a field trip to see what we could see, and there was a lot! On one side is the Potomac River with fabulous views including Mount Vernon and the newly-built living shoreline.

In the marsh and the swamp adjoining we saw a wild variety of late-summer wildflowers and wetland plants. Flowering plants included Pickerelweed (Pontederia cordata), Marsh mallow (aka Swamp hibiscus) (Hibiscus moscheutos), Lizard’s tail (Saururus cernuus), and rushes (Juncus sp.). The one that really got our attention, however, was Poison hemlock (Conium maculatum)! Everyone pulled out their Newcomb’s and keyed it out to be sure.

Not in flower were both Arrowhead (Sagittaria latifolia) and Arrow arum (Peltandra virginica). Buttonbush (Cephalanthus occidentalis) had its ball-like fruits, and Silky dogwood (Cornus amomum) had blue-purple berries. We even found the native passionflower (Passiflora lutea)

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Farewell with love, Janet

Janet Cooney (Class of 2009) died July 19th the same way she lived, quietly, without complaints.

Janet called a few days after I got home from the hospital after my recent surgery, to find out how I was doing. I did not know she had also been in the hospital. After patiently listening to my complaints she said “well, you and I both”. My heart sank as I asked her what was wrong, and she proceeded to tell me about her visits to the hospital and the prognosis she had received that morning of lung cancer that had metastasized to her liver.

What she told me did not sound good, and in spite of the scary diagnosis she was excited about going in a few days to their place in Vermont, which she loved dearly. But unfortunately the cancer had spread throughout her lungs and into her liver and she died within a week of the diagnosis, never making the trip. Janet was cremated and her ashes were scattered around their property in Vermont without ceremony.

A few years earlier Janet had nursed her husband through several years and a slow death from lung cancer, again never complaining, just doing what she had to, and always smiling. We would talk, but she never wanted to bother others with her burden.

Janet was an avid out-door woman and loved to hike, she knew wild plants better than most of us MGs, and she was quite a reader as well, so I thought MGs would be something she would enjoy. I invited her to our 2008 fall pot luck, and she seemed to enjoy the affair. She took

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PISCATAWAY (Continued from page 4)

with its little yellow-ish flowers.

We all came away scratching our heads over another vine with fruits similar to our common wild grape, but with much more dissected leaves. But when I was at the park with some really serious MD Native Plant Society experts on September 24, I found that the dissected-leaves “grape” was really Porcelain-berry (Ampelopsis brevipedunculata), a really nasty invasive which may be just getting a foothold in the park.

All in all, it was a great summer exploration. If you want to visit the boardwalk yourself, take route 210 to Accokeek, turn left on Livingston Rd., immediate right on Biddle, and immediate left on Bryan Point Rd. Go 2.9 miles, slow down, and turn in the drive on the right -you won’t see the sign until after you turn. Drive a few hundred yards to the parking lot and follow the path at the end of the lot. If you let your GPS take you down Cactus Hill Rd. Instead of following these directions, you’re on your own!

Editor’s note:

I found the Dodder, Cuscuta gronovii, to be of particular interest to me on the Piscataway National Park field trip. See page 18 for more information on this

Photo on page 4 shows the boardwalk at Piscataway National Park with, from top to bottom: Louise Kearns, Cindi Barnhart, Mary Cocke, Jessica Milstead and Maggie Tieger.

Blue berries of the Silky dogwood, Cornus amomum; Poison hemlock, Conium maculatum (photo courtesy of Wikipedia), and the pink flowers are Swamp milkweed, Asclepias incarnata.
Detention Center Grew Lots of Tasty Veggies

By Gale Kladitis, Class of 2008

The tomatoes and peppers are still producing at the DC garden. So far the approximate yields are tomatoes: 3 bushels, peppers: 3 bushels, turnips: 5 bushels, beets: 3 bushels, carrots: 1-2 bushels, black-eyed peas: 2 bushels, green beans: 2 bushels, green and yellow squash: 34 bushels, potatoes: 2 bushels, tomatillos & okra: 2 bushels -- and more that I can’t remember. This is lots of food for a 40’ x 60’ garden.

The recent hurricanes and tropical storms brought us power outages and flooded basements, but they also brought a boon for gardeners. The ground is no longer dried out and unfriendly to plant roots. The next couple of months are the perfect time to plant for next spring. While the shrubs, trees, and flowers are looking worn and tired as they prepare to lose their leaves, the ground is still warm. Plants put into the ground in the next couple of months will have time to grow strong roots and be ready to take off next spring.

The bonus is that the new plants will be well established and it won’t be such a battle to provide them with enough water to counteract the blazing sun and heat of spring and summer. They can’t be ignored next spring, but they won’t have to be babied either. While plants in containers can be planted any time the ground isn’t frozen, September and October are the optimum months for almost all of them.

It’s also time to begin garden cleanup. Frazzled, tired perennials that detract from your plantings can be trimmed back now without damage. At this point, cutting things back is cosmetic - though plants that have gone to seed may provide food for the birds into the winter if they’re allowed to stay. Some, like chrysanthemums, are of course just coming into their own and can be encouraged.

However, don’t get out the pruning equipment quite yet. If they haven’t yet been pruned, most woody plants are better pruned while they’re dormant in the winter. More on that in a future blog; timing of pruning for flowering shrubs can make the difference between more flowers and no flowers for the season.

Rachel Carson wrote Silent Spring, documenting the impacts of pesticides on ecology, and is often credited with reviving the environmentalist movement.

Quotation

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.”~Rachel Carson
This past spring our main contact at St. Charles (Craig Renner) asked me to write for a blog that's being operated for the community. Each month since I've tried to give some useful gardening hints. If you want to take a look at the results, go to: http://www.stcharlesmd.com/gardening-tips.html.

By Jessica Milstead, Class of 2002

Dodder is a native plant, so in the photo you see nature taking its course. The only way to get rid of it in gardens is to prevent its flowers from setting seed and to cut away all the infested stems or leaves of the host plant. Since not all the seeds germinate the first year it will be necessary to continue the effort for several years.

Dodder (Cuscuta gronovii) is a member of the morning-glory family (Convolvulaceae), even though the only obvious similarity is that it's a vine. It is a parasite, drawing all of its nourishment by means of suckers that draw out the host plant's sap. If you see a mass of slender bright orange stems twined around other plants or lying all over them, that's dodder.

By Jessica Milstead, Class of 2002

Bay-Wise Presentation to the Commissioners

By Ronda Goldman, Bay-Wise Coordinator

The Bay-Wise program finished a wonderful spring and summer season with a milestone being reached in the state of Maryland. Charles County is the first county to have the Bay-Wise program adopted by the government leaders. Under the leadership of its President, Candice Quinn Kelly, the Charles County Board of Commissioners resolved to support the program and encourage residents to take the Bay-Wise challenge. This support followed the successful certification of the Charles County government building after acquiring 58 inches on the yardstick.

Tom Roland, Charles County’s Chief of Parks & Grounds, heads the environmental practices at the government building as well as throughout the county. During the evaluation Tom pointed out the county’s efforts in composting, yard waste recycling, storm-water management, and the introduction of native plants. This effort took three years to complete and everyone is excited about the impact it will have on residents. The commissioners have also expressed interest in having their personal landscapes evaluated. The presentation was well attended, and I would like to thank Karol Dyson, Carol Teets, the Bay-Wise Committee, and other Master Gardeners for their attendance and commitment to this effort. Representatives from local schools, environmental clubs, and the maintenance staff were also in attendance. It was a beautiful day for such a beautiful event.
2012 MG Training Class Will Go Six Weeks

By Barbie Walter, Class of 2006

As usual I am not as far along as I would like to be, but the training class will happen. Somehow it always does!!

As most of you have already heard, two weeks have been added to the training, in part to get in the 40 required hours, and also to work in more time for exposure and interaction among MGs, Interns, and students. The class will begin on February 21 and an advanced training, graduation and pinning will be held on March 29. A combination Project Day and General Membership meeting will be March 27, 9:00-3:00, with a break for lunch. This event is being incorporated into the training program to make sure all students can attend and, again, allow more interaction with MGs and Interns.

At the moment I am working with two facilitator coordinators so they can get started on recruiting and training. You will be hearing from them soon after the kinks are worked out.

After the Butterflies — A Nursery Is Begun

By Cheryl Kasunich, Class of 2010

The flowers are gone, but Butterflyweed (Asclepias tuberosa) has a second season. A native plant and member of the milkweed family, the Butterflyweed moves from hosting Monarch butterflies to playing host and nursery for Milkweed bugs (Lygaeus kalmii).

The Butterflyweed grows 18-24 inches high and develops bright orange and yellow flowers from May to July. After the flowers, it forms seed pods similar to the common milkweed. The plant thrives in a broad range of conditions including bright full sun to partial shade, poor soil; dry to moist as long as it’s well drained. It can be found growing wild in dry fields and along roadsides. My Butterflyweed thrives next to a lamp post along a hot driveway. Because of the seed pods, it is a prolific re-seeder. I find that small volunteers can easily be transplanted or discarded. The plant forms a substantial tap root that does not transplant as well as the seedlings.

Butterflyweed is very drought resistant and a great plant if you are xeriscaping. And just in case I haven’t sold you on Butterflyweed, it is deer resistant!

Butterflyweed (Asclepias tuberosa) with seed pods. Inset photos, top right, Milkweed bug (Lygaeus kalmii) and lower right, a colorful flower in June.
Some of the Detention Center inmates were being released and got permission to take a watermelon with them. Jon shared some secrets to picking a ripe watermelon. Your chance of getting a ripe melon is good if the part of the watermelon on the ground has lightened in color and the vine tendril nearest the melon is dead. There was a lively discussion about melon thumping that ensued!

The class was inexpensive ($10) and was driven by questions from the participants. Whether you are a novice or an expert, you were able to take away some valuable tips for success in keeping ahead of insect pests and fungi!

PEST  (Continued from page 15)

Jon thumps a watermelon to determine its ripeness.

A bean beetle and eggs on green beans from the Detention Center garden.

FAIR  (Continued from page 3)

I look forward to next year when the Master Gardeners will again create a superior display or two.

Editor’s note:

We were featured in the Charles County Detention Center photo array, in the Sheriff’s trailer, for their garden’s Bay-Wise certification and the CCDC Horticultural Education Project.

I was proud and pleased to see us so well represented in photos.

Detention Center Garden Put to Bed for 2011

By Gale Kladitis, Class of 2008

We had only a few students for the fall classes, due to issues of eligibility and work release commitments. The volunteers and I are postponing our regularly scheduled classes for the fall and simply taking care of closing up the garden and pruning the landscape area for the winter. The Center will have no difficulty getting enough volunteers to help outside so we will have students to assist in the garden and pruning. The classes are worthwhile, and will be continued when we have a reasonable number of students. Since men and women can not be in the same class, the class will be offered to whichever group is larger.

Our Ninth Annual Christmas in April Project

By Carol Teets, Class of 2003

Experienced Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Interns will partner with the Christmas in April organization again in 2012. Christmas in April, a chapter of a national organization, is dedicated to rebuilding and repairing homes of elderly, disabled, and low-income residents.

Plan to be among the 850-plus volunteers in Charles County to make a difference for these deserving citizens. In early 2012 I will be sharing more information on how you can participate in this annual endeavor scheduled for the week of April 28.
The HGIC Newsletter Needs Your Articles

By Jon Traunfeld, Director, Home and Garden Information Center

HGIC is opening the e-newsletter up to new writers and topics and would love to include 1-2 articles in each issue from MG Coordinators and MG Volunteers. Now you can reach a wider audience and gain recognition for individual authors and their MG programs.

Here’s how it works:

The articles should be around 500 words but shorter and longer articles can also work. Articles should be edited and checked for spelling and punctuation. We may do some additional editing.

Photos are important for visual appeal and learning.

Tell us which season the article best fits.

Here’s next year’s schedule:

2012 Schedule

Winter issue (Dec-Feb): Articles due Nov. 4
Spring issue (March-May): Articles due Feb. 3
Summer issue (June-Aug): Articles due May 4
Fall issue (Sept-Nov): Articles due Aug. 5

The fall issue will be out this week. If you or any of your MGs are not receiving it, please send Lynn e-mail addresses and she will add them right away jjjacobs@umd.edu. And here’s a link to past issues of the HGIC newsletter- http://www.hgic.umd.edu/content/whatsnew.cfm

Articles can be about specific plants or cultivars that you know and love, sustainable garden/landscape practices, unique MG projects that are making a difference, etc.

Send your article and photos to me (jont@umd.edu). It’s OK if the article has appeared or will appear in a county/city MG newsletter. Start sending articles NOW!

We’ll notify you if your article will be published. If we get lots of articles, we’ll file those that don’t get published to use in future issues.

PEST (Continued from page 14)
zucchini leaves. He showed us the difference between powdery mildew and the naturally occurring silver spots that occur with mature plants.

Squash bugs (adults and whitish nymphs with black legs) are devastating to squash and pumpkins. They suck juice out of the leaves, leaving yellow holes.

We saw examples of cucumber beetles, which Jon controls with the use of row cover over the plants until the plants start to bloom. He shared some organic products that have proven to be effective. Capt. Jack’s Dead Bug spinosad was effective for mites, aphids, beetles and caterpillars. Bt (Thuricide) was effective for gypsy moths and some types of caterpillars.

Harlequin bugs in various stages of growth were seen on leaves. We even saw the black-and-white barrel-shaped egg casing.

There was some fruit rot on the plants and Jon shared that removing the diseased fruit was really the only course of action that helped.

The Detention Center garden is using both determinate and indeterminate tomato plants this year. For those of you like me who are not up on vegetables, determinate means that the plants grow to a certain height and then stop. An indeterminate tomato plant would just keep growing taller and taller. Stink bug damage is evident this year. They cause a cloudy spot on the fruit that is pithy underneath.

Many diseases affect tomatoes. A major one, early blight, starts with the leaves at the bottom of the plant. Spots with yellow around them appear on the leaves. Pull off diseased leaves. Space plants at least 2 feet apart. Fixed copper fungicide (Daconil) is very effective.

Diseased leaves can be put in a compost pile that has a temperature of at least 130 degrees. Jon suggested using a black trash bag that is left in the sun as an alternative if your compost is not hot enough. We are not experiencing late blight this year on tomatoes the way we did in 2009.

To avoid disease on potatoes, John said to use seed potatoes instead of eyes from grocery store potatoes and to pull up any volunteers at the end of the season. Disease can winter over in the roots of potatoes and destroy the following year’s crop.

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Vegetable Plant & Pest Diagnostic With Jon

By Sue Brewer, Class of 2008

On a beautiful summer day, I made my way south to the Charles County Detention Center for the class and my first visit. I expected the razor wire but was surprised to see two beautiful gardens that have been planned and developed under the guidance of Charles County Master Gardeners.

The pergola garden was in bloom and truly is a jewel in the midst of the concrete. With help from Jessica Milstead on the design, Gale Kladitis organized development and planting of this garden.

The wonderful mix of plants requires low maintenance, and the cost was under $1,000 for all of the material.

After going through 2 locked gates, we arrived at the vegetable garden which was just bursting with ripe fruit and vegetables. We saw the plan and how the garden had been certified Bay-Wise due to the use of compost only to provide nutrients. No pesticides are used.

Jon Traunfeld brought both leaves and insects for us to view and identify diseases and pests during the first hour. The second hour was devoted to actually moving in the garden and seeing diseases and insects on plant material.

During the first hour, Jon shared information about brown marmorated stink bugs, green stink bugs and regular brown stink bugs. Jon has been trying different measures to deal with the bugs. He tried row cover but found that it raised the temperature and humidity too high for the plants underneath so he abandoned that idea. He is currently trying a product called “Surround.” It is a natural kaolin clay in powdered form which is mixed with water and sprayed on the leaves and fruit. When it dries, it creates a barrier to deter the bugs. The jury is still out.

Jon addressed white spots on (Continued on page 15)
Fall / Winter Events

October

11-14 Tuesday through Friday, International Master Gardener Conference, Charleston, West Virginia, for more information go to: http://imgc.ext.wvu.edu

25 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Membership Meeting, Extension Office, Open to all MGS

November

15 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Steering Committee Meeting with Karol Dyson, Extension Office, Steering Members only

22 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Membership Meeting, Extension Office, Open to all MGS

December

6 Tuesday, 6 p.m.; Holiday Meeting and Potluck, Hampshire Neighborhood Center, Waldorf, Ann Bodling of Thistlebrook Natives will be our speaker

January

24 Tuesday, 10 a.m.; Membership Meeting, Extension Office, Open to all MGS

February

21-28 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.; Master Gardener Training class, Extension office, Contact Barbie Walter for more information. See page 8

March

1-29 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.; Master Gardener Training class continues, Extension office (See the next two listings for additional information about March 27 and 29)

27 Tuesday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.; General Membership Meeting and Project Day with lunch break

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A Book Review

By Jessica Milstead, Class of 2002

If you’re an avid promoter of native plants, elegant horticultural specimens, or both, you’ll find another way of thinking about plants in Peter Del Tredici’s *Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast: A Field guide*. (Comstock Publishing / Cornell University Press, 2010). Del Tredici’s thesis is that anything that will grow in cracks in sidewalks, trashed vacant lots, and railway cuttings in cities is to be praised rather than put down.

He has a point. Most of the plants he describes and pictures are ones we would consider weeds. That’s because they will grow almost anywhere under horribly adverse conditions. Give them fertile organic soil and they will out-compete anything else. But in a paved-over city or the rocks along railroad tracks, we need to be glad that anything will survive.

I didn’t think I would like a book that praises invasive plants, but I came away from this one with new respect for those tough plants, like the “tree that grows in Brooklyn,” aka Tree of heaven or *Ailanthus altissima*. Just don’t bring their seeds or cuttings out to the countryside or a suburban garden and plant them in good soil!